UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/23790*
7 April 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 6 APRIL 1992 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I wish to draw your attention to the nature of the incident which took place on 1 April 1992 in Rafah in the Gaza District. Before elaborating on the details of what occurred, I believe it is important to bear in mind the overall context.

Since the convening of the direct Arab-Israeli peace negotiations in Madrid at the end of October 1991, Israel has been subjected to a wave of deadly terrorist attacks against its citizens both at home and abroad. These attacks have left 17 Israelis dead and more than 250 wounded. The victims have included Jews and Arabs, schoolchildren and diplomats serving overseas.

Terrorist leaders have stepped up their calls for violence against Israelis and have urged an intensification of attacks. Consequently, the violence has become more frequent and more chilling.

In addition to targeting Israelis, the terrorist leaders of the intifadah have been conducting a reign of assassination and intimidation among the Palestinian Arab population of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Between 27 March and 2 April 1992, seven Palestinian Arabs were murdered and two others wounded by fellow Arabs. This is in addition to the 67 Palestinian Arabs that have been killed by their brethren since 1 January 1992.

It is in the context of the atmosphere of intifadah violence and bloodshed that the incident of 1 April 1992 should be viewed. Desperate to breathe new life into the intifadah, the various terrorist organizations have been mounting a relentless campaign of violence designed to undermine the peace process. The incident of 1 April 1992 was but a further link in the chain of terror, as the following details shall illustrate:

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* Reissued for technical reasons.

At 1800 hours local time, on 1 April 1992, a hand grenade was thrown at an IDF lookout post in southern Rafah. Additional IDF forces arrived at the scene and managed to rapidly close off all points of exit from the area. An IDF force identified and encountered a local vehicle which had fled from the area. The vehicle ran over at least three local residents with complete disregard and attempted to evade the scene. While giving chase, the IDF troops were attacked with three firebombs, one of which struck a Border Patrol jeep which caught fire. The IDF force returned fire at those who had thrown the firebombs, killing two of them. Mass disturbances broke out in several locations in the area. Local residents leapt upon vehicles of the security forces, and IDF troops were compelled to resort to opening fire in order to disperse the rioters. During the disturbances, a makeshift hand grenade was thrown at IDF troops.

In the course of the disturbances, four local residents were killed, two of whom had thrown firebombs at IDF forces. It is unclear if the other two local residents died as a result of being run over by the local vehicle or as a result of IDF fire in an attempt to quell the riots. The matter is being investigated by the competent authorities. The bodies of the four residents were taken from the hospital by their families and buried. Additional casualties included 11 local residents who were wounded. Three IDF troops were lightly wounded. Subsequently, on 2 April, further rioting ensued in which 12 local residents were injured.

As the facts clearly demonstrate, the IDF troops involved in the incident and its aftermath were merely acting in self-defence after they had been attacked with lethal weapons, and were exercising their responsibility under international law to maintain law and order in the area.

I trust that this letter shall clarify the true nature and context of the recent events that took place in Rafah.

I should be grateful if the text of this letter would be circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yoram ARIDOR
Ambassador